THOUGHTS OF JUNE, 2011

1. An examined life is a safe life, is it not? It is a life open to God and others, examined by God and others, spoken to by God and others, prayed for by God and others. It’s good to know that Jesus and other brothers love us, understand us and intercede for us. What’s the alternative? Hiding in the darkness while proclaiming light, being fearful while acting brave, pretending strength while showing weakness.

2. A slowly but steadily aging brother said; “The fellow who said, ‘The best is yet to be’ wasn’t very old.” He meant to be humorous, but there are many who agree wholeheartedly with him. Certainly, there are all sorts of dis-eases that become common to all of us if we live long enough but, as one of those, I want to say that my and Nancy’s lives have only gotten better the older we have gotten. Being surrounded with those who love you helps, but without that or any other blessing, life only gets better while walking with the Lord. It only gets worse, despite multiple blessings, when we don’t walk with Him.

3. An update on America’s deteriorating medical system: As government regulations and control of medical practices increase, and punishments abound for incomplete paperwork and processes, more and more physicians are opting out of Medicare and other government-related systems, and changing their practices to those of the good ole days – just the doctor and the patient. That change reduces the doctor bill remarkably.

Other physicians are retiring early and some are transitioning into related fields, but many are going third party free to finish their careers. I have been retired from the fray for almost 11 years. If my life had not been filled with the Lord’s current calling, I would probably miss patient care but certainly not the huge amount of non-medical paperwork, non-patient considerations, and the government’s pervasive instructions on the medical treatment of every patient.

4. This Thought is not really a change from Thought No. 3, but is a generic umbrella – meaning that Thought No. 3 and others are covered by this No. 4. Every world system is controlled by evil spiritual forces, to variable extent, dependent upon the influence of the kingdom of God upon the many world systems from time to time and from place to place.

 Satan is the top evil power. He is the prince of this world. As such, he gives power to those whom he chooses. He offered Jesus the overall position of ruler of the world, but it would have been under his [Satan’s] ultimate control. Jesus turned down the offer in order to bring into the world a counter-kingdom, the kingdom of God. He [Jesus] was successful. The kingdom of God is here and has been here for 2,000 years. It is invisible, Jesus is its head, God the Father selects membership in His kingdom from those among Satan’s kingdom, believers in Jesus then live in the invisible kingdom by faith in their King, and the world power and influence of Satan are progressively diminished over and around those who are faithful citizens of God’s kingdom. God’s people have no power of their own, but their resources are unlimited as they trust and obey Him. That process is designed to lead them to the end of themselves and into the life and ministry of Jesus who had followed the same path while He was here. The reality of the kingdom of God on earth is displayed as its citizens trust and obey their King.

Back to tie-in America’s deteriorating medical system. Every world system has one of Satan’s evil powers/spirits/angels dominating it. As long as doctors loved their patients, and treated them as their mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, and as long as patients honored their doctors as those who labored among them, keeping watch over their bodies and souls, the kingdom of God was manifest in that system. When other factors entered in, God’s reign diminished and Satan’s increased. I think it was/is apparent to those who have medico-spiritual insight.

Thus, we see doctors again moving away from any outside influence upon their relationship with their patients. However, if the move is simply away from outside controls due to financial strain and onerous regulations and does not include conviction of and repentance from one’s own contribution to the mess, Holy Spiritual power will be insufficient for a real and enduring revival of the medical system. We shall see, and hopefully we shall do, the faithful and obedient things to which we are called.

5. Some would like to loosen the state laws that say once a child is born to you, you can never disclaim him/her. They say that the permanency of the parent-child relationship allows the child to be presumptuous, to do things contrary to his parents’ desires because he knows he cannot be disavowed. They say that if the child could be entirely disclaimed, that potential disclaiming would be like an axe hanging over the child’s head and keep him in line, obedient to his parents.

Those against changing the law say that his parents’ steadfast love and permanent attachment would free the child from a fragile, performance-based relationship with his parents, and would bring forth appreciation, love and obedience from both obedient and disobedient children. Their point is that being loved first and indelibly, knowing that they will never be denied, is vital to the child’s perception of parental love.

If you see Scripture running throughout those two paragraphs concerning an imaginary state law, you already know, “once saved, always saved.” God is the eternal genius.

6. At the end of all things of our earthly lives, the blessed ones say, “From the time I was born again, I have never lived anywhere except in heaven.” The unblessed ones say, “I have never lived anywhere except in hell.” Both speak truth. -- adapted from The Great Divorce, by C. S. Lewis.

7. H. A. Ironside said: “God is not looking for brilliant men, is not depending upon eloquent men, is not shut up to the use of talented men in sending His gospel out in the world. God is looking for the broken men who have judged themselves in the light of the cross of Christ. When He wants anything done, He takes up men who have come to the end of themselves, whose confidence is not in themselves, but in God.” That sounds right to me.

8. This kind of simple thought helps keep me focused: “If it is real it will last forever.”

9. Scripture shows us two types of authority: 1) authority of office and 2) authority of bearing or soul or person. The multitudes who listened to Jesus teach recognized His authority [type 2], distinct from the authority of the Jewish religious teachers [type 1] – Matt. 7:28-29. Those teachers had office authority. Jesus taught obedience to those Pharisees in office authority but told His disciples to not be like them – Matt. 23:2-3]. However, Jesus had the bearing of authority, and it showed. If I had to imagine a righteous route to take to God’s authority, as had Jesus, I would say it is to serve while declining every offer of office authority.

10. The Maori schoolchildren in New Zealand know their history, and know the Gospel of Luke. It began in 1835 when The Bible Society published 100 copies of the Gospel of Luke in the Maori language. Missionaries gave one to a 12 year old girl, Tarore, at a mission school. She read it to her father, the chief of the Waikato tribe, and kept the book under her pillow when she slept. One night, an enemy raiding party from the Rotorua tribe killed her and took the book.

The Rotorua chief was unable to read, so discarded the book. However, his slave boy, who had learned to read, found it and read it to the chief. The chief believed what he heard and resolved to become a Christian, and to seek out the girl’s father and ask for his forgiveness. When he finally confronted the father, the father forgave him. That began a peaceful relationship between the two previously warring tribes.

This story became the key to the conversion of many of the Maori tribes. When missionaries went into unreached areas, they discovered that many of the tribes had been converted to Christ due to the story of Tarore and her copy of the Gospel of Luke making its rounds.

In 1840, when the nation of New Zealand was born by a treaty between England and the Maori tribes, a major obligation of England was to safeguard and protect the Maori’s rights of worship, much of which already was Christianity. There are Bibles in schools, and many Christian schools receive significant government support.

Each stanza of New Zealand’s national anthem calls upon God to defend their nation.

11. The best religion of the times produced both prophets and Pharisees. The strongest power of the times produced both the great 200 year Pax Romana and the Caesars’ 10 great persecutions of Christians. The most brilliant philosophy of the times produced in the Greeks both the acknowledged unobtainable pursuit of wisdom and the mind that still critiques God.

It was into that Jewish, Roman and Greek mind that Jesus appeared – the Living Word and God of the Jews in human flesh; the most peaceful and powerful leader in history; the perfect, complete, universal man, the very one the Greeks were looking for. None saw Him whom they desired, because they defined their desires in human terms. Yet, with all of that disconnect, it was God’s perfect timing for the presentation of His Son.

In like manner, the Lord still works that way today. The most tremendous miracles are seen as our flesh chases after carnality. Then into that contrariness comes the revelation of Jesus and we are conquered, having been conquered by the revelation of Himself.

If we will accept it, everything that happens in our lives is equally timed and measured out – perfectly tailored for each one of us. No accidents. No “oops” on God’s part. Relax. Trust and obey Him. Live in peace with everyone, as much as it depends upon you. Get about life as it is. He is Lord of all.

12. It has been suggested by some that Luke’s writings [especially the Acts of the Apostles] were prepared for historical background in a case being prepared for appeal to Caesar – Paul’s. Such preparation was expensive, and Theophilus [Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1] may have been Paul’s sponsor. If that is so, notice that Luke’s pre-trial thesis shows that 1) the Jewish leadership, as Paul’s adversaries, was responsible for the many episodes of civil unrest associated about Paul, 2) the Roman centurions were always shown as the good guys, and 3) that the books were written for Romans and those who viewed Rome favorably. Without that sort of solid view of Luke’s writings, meaning that the Holy Spirit wove a perfect pattern, I think that we come at it with a too shallow perspective and appreciation.

13. God is the author of all life. When He had finished a workday of creation, He called His handiwork “good.” Can we improve upon His work? No; but lots of bad things have happened to His perfect creation since those first 6 days, and we may be able to properly restore some of it during our lifetime and during the church age. Creation has degenerated, including genetically. Things are getting worse, not better. That includes all creation; not just humanity.

So, since the Lord designed every living thing, using DNA for building blocks, are we doing a great thing by modifying current design, a process called genetic engineering? Or, is genetic engineering a violation of God’s order of things? Modified genes function better [in some ways, plus ways as yet unknown]. Humanity has been doing selective breeding of animals and plants for centuries, but that is a simple, limited change of similar organisms, the possibilities for which have always existed and some of which have occurred. Genetic engineering leaps across all natural barriers, even placing animal DNA into human genes, and vs. Genetic engineering leaps already involve the ability to move between plants, animals and humans.

The current scope of genetically engineered food is that 80% of the processed food in America’s supermarkets contains ingredients from genetically engineered crops. Human genes have been introduced into hundreds of dairy cows, resulting in cows that produce milk having the same properties as human breast milk. What may be the unintended consequences – medically and morally?

Something of the degenerate nature happens to the human mind when the highly intelligent begin experiencing success in the “God only” realm. The co-discoverer of DNA, a Novel laureate, said “.. no newborn infant should be declared human until it has passed certain tests regarding its genetic endowment and that if it fails these tests it forfeits its right to live.” That person received a “Peace” Prize. When we turn human life into “only cells” or “only tissue,” and deal with it in test tubes, it becomes nonhuman -- more chemical and mechanical than human.

It may be that, instead of restoring God’s creation, we are becoming further de-generate.

14. How many garments has the Lord given you to wear? Don’t count those hanging in your closet. I’m referring to those handed to each Christian by the Lord’s own hand – Is. 61:10. Answer: Two.

One garment is the garment of salvation which is imputed to us at our rebirth. That garment cannot be torn or dirtied because it is the full, perfect and permanent righteousness of Jesus. It is our internal sanctification, His fitness that Jesus’ and our Father require for standing before Them – 2 Cor. 7:1; 11:2. This garment is without spot or wrinkle. Thus, we always have place to stand before Him.

The other garment is the one for which we have responsibility. It is of the believer’s righteous works, which is dirtied through our own negligence and must be re-cleaned through the process of our repentance, confession and God’s cleansing – 2 Cor. 7:1; 11:2; 1 John 1:9; Rev. 19:7-8. The angel said to Sardis: “There are a few who have not defiled their garments” – Rev. 3:4. This second garment is defiled by spiritual or moral transgression, meaning our unfaithfulness. Quenching His Spirit is an act of unfaithfulness. This garment is the one that Christ requires for the marriage supper, it being our own righteous works, the fruit from our lives. We must keep ourselves clean and re-cleaned – James 1:27; Rev. 16:15.

15. The number 10 is used 248 times in the Bible. It means “the measure of human responsibility” and “completion.” Every number means something in Scripture. Most of us know that the number 7, and its multiples, indicated fullness or perfection.

16. Supporters of Darwinism would like the masses to think that any disagreement with their theory of evolution is based on religion, thus supposedly removing that criticism from scientific consideration. Likewise, any promotion of Intelligent Design is labeled as religious. If that were true, you would have to call an awful lot of prominent scientists I. D. supporters. The scientific literature is full of disagreements by evolutionists and non-evolutionists about key aspects of evolutionary theory.

At the base of this religious/scientific battle is the fact that accurate science will always agree with accurate religion. The same infallible Person founded and is sustaining both.

Neither the revelation of God’s Word nor of His natural creation is fully understood by anyone. That knowledge has and will come piece by piece, precept upon precept, little by little as the Creator brings His creation along according to His plan. Until that perfect understanding has been granted, we will continue seeing strong absolutes on both sides, with those who take contrary and absoute stands on either side being wrong or incomplete.

17. In the parable of the prodigal son, both sons were focused on being servants. The father was focused on sons. Since we tend to relate to one son or the other, does that bit of information help? It makes me feel good, and determine to be a son who is focused on my Father.

18. The objects of Jesus’ wrath were those who said they were believers but did not walk as disciples. Talking the gospel but not living it put that person in the category of being a hypocrite. So, in 1 Peter 4:17-18, Peter said the following [those are my elaborations in brackets]: “For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those [Christians] who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty [through trials] that the righteous [faithful] is saved [sanctified, not “heaven vs. hell], what will become of the godless man [hypocrite] and the sinner [rank unbeliever]?” Peter said that judgment starts in the church.

This is serious, folks. He said that God will not judge the world until He has judged the church. He will first judge those who [say they] know Him, and then judge those who do not. God is just, holy, impartial, good, righteous and fair, so He must judge His own first. A father must first get his own household in order, and then judge the neighbors – lest he himself become a hypocrite.

Perhaps the world will see that and many be saved. The world is already judging all who present themselves as the church, but in many cases are laughing and ridiculing. When they see the righteous church, that should help the spread of the gospel message.

19. I have said that Daniel 11:32-35 and 12:3, 10 are blessed verses because therein are those who have insight, who know what is going on in their world, those who walk circumspectly, who know God’s truth and hold to it when all else parades about as “truth” but is not. Those saints do not require the Lord to do sweet things for them or reward them with temporal goodies, even at the cost of their lives. They hope for the best in this world but are focused on the reward in the hereafter. They know what is going on and live by it.

Add to those verses those in Exodus 33:1-3, 15. Therein the Lord offers Moses and the Israelites direct passage to the Promised Land, victory over the tribes living there, the fulfillment of His words to the patriarchs – but that He was not going with them due to their sinfulness. Moses was stunned. He could not imagine settling for God’s blessings but being without Him. What insight into reality! Moses said he was not going into the Land if the Lord was not going with them. The solution to that impasse was Israel’s repentance, God’s patience, and years in the wilderness while Jehovah re-formed Israel, His son.

Dear brothers and sisters; this Thought no. 19 is foundational. If we are grasped by it, we are a stable, mature spiritual people – useful to God our Father. If we are not grasped by it, we are infants at best.

20. Failure! The fear of being a failure motivates everyone, to some extent – but not Jesus, and it is less and less a motivational factor for us as we walk closer and closer with the Lord. Fear of failure is a motivation associated with only our flesh. Also, after a failure, fear of being found out, or of punishment for our failure, or of not being restored, is surely common.

Remember Adam’s failure, and his fear of being found out. Remember Moses’ fear, which drove him into his personal wilderness for 40 years until his fear had been greatly dealt with. Remember Jonah’s fear, which drove him to do completely the opposite of God’s calling on his life. Remember Peter’s fear when he refused to be known as Jesus’ friend and disciple. All of these men were controlled by fear, with variable responses during and after their failures.

Be encouraged, saints. If you have been a terrible failure, or even a small failure, the Lord’s command is “Stop fearing!” The accuser of the brethren tells us that fear is helpful and normal. As above, it is a flesh response that helps us only in the flesh. It is not a righteous motivation. The Lord prefers that we look at it His way. [The fear of God is a different thing.]

So, what to do? Face our failure, confess our sin, learn from our failure, and go onward to the Redeemer’s next step for our lives. Our usefulness [fellowship and service] to Him does not cease with failure. In fact, He will turn it to His and our good if we are among those who love Him and are responsive to Him. Don’t stop when you find yourself standing in the muck of your life, no matter how many times you have returned to the muck, no matter how old you are or how impossible the situation. Even if dying in the midst of your failure and because of your failure, that place becomes the Lord’s perfect place for your victory when we allow Him to restore our souls.

21. The magnitude of a problem often undermines our interest in doing something about it. Shouldn’t it be the other way? The magnitude of a problem should stir us to action. It has been engineered by the Master Engineer who has created for Himself a “God-only” work space.

22. The main cause of divorce is said to be ingratitude. If so, how to improve our ingratitude – which would be helpful for any circumstance? Start with learning to recognize goodness, and then realize that all goodness is a gift. Then express due gratitude.

23. Have you ever wondered why the Lord had Moses strike the earth/rock and bring forth Life/water? Perhaps it was a display of God-in and through-man restoring His curse as spoken in Genesis 3:17-19. Good move!

24. Older men, especially you grandfathers, remember to bless your descendents. You can do it like the patriarchs did in the Bible, or make it simple like, “I love you, I love your children, and I love your grandchildren.” That blessing will be very effective if you pronounce it yearly upon your children, then your grandchildren, starting when they are 5 or 6 years old. They won’t understand why you are blessing descendents who do not yet exist. Don’t explain it unless they ask you to. They will never forget you, and the blessing.

25. In the Jewish Bedtime Prayers is a beautiful prayer about forgiveness. It goes like this: “Master of the universe, I hereby forgive anyone who angered or antagonized me … whether he did it accidently, willfully, carelessly or purposely.” Are you up to it? Forgiveness releases tremendous power.

26. No one puts forth effort without reward. God created us like that, and civil governments would do better if they knew that truth. Compare those who work for paychecks, and welfare recipients who are given money. Commonly, their attitudes are created according to the amount of effort or work they put into their labors or gifts. Parents know the principle, and successful ones have applied it. Our Creator did not ignore it when He began dealing with us on an eternal basis. Jesus endured while keeping His eyes on the reward. Honey attracts more flies than does vinegar. There are endless, full-time applications of that godly principle.

27. When Khrushchev had finished his famous speech denouncing Stalin at the 20th Party congress in 1956, he asked for questions to be passed to the rostrum in writing. “Comrades,” he said after receiving a batch of question slips, “I have received a question asking ‘As Bolsheviks, how could you stand by and watch Stalin’s atrocities without speaking out against them?’ Who wrote this, Comrades?”

Silence.

“I ask you again, Comrades: Who asked this question?”

Silence.

“Comrades, are we Bolsheviks or are we cowardly old women? I say for the third and last time: Whoever asked this question, let him stand up like a man!”

Silence.

“You see, Comrades? That’s exactly why we kept our mouths shut, too.”

28. It has been said that the greatest danger we face is not being able to see the Lord’s hand in our troubles.

29. The United Nations says that more than sixty million people have been infected with AIDS in the past 30 years, with at least 25 million dying from the disease.

30. Our Texas governor, Rick Perry, has invited all other 49 states’ governors to join him in Houston on August 6th for a day of fasting and prayer on behalf of our nation. A few (?) religious leaders immediately began finding reasons for not attending. They looked for at least one point of disagreement with the governor, and used that to criticize him and excuse themselves from the meeting. Some say that the governor is moving toward running for president, and that this is a political meeting for that purpose.

That reveals a basic fault that is especially prevalent among Protestants [my opinion/observation]. That fault is that political support for a good or the best candidate will not be granted unless we have total agreement with the candidate on all points of his platform. Instead, supporting and voting for a candidate must ordinarily be on the basis of the best available person, even when we do not wholly agree with him. It would be rare that a candidate would be supported by a majority of voters because they agree with every plank in his platform.

31. Christians have been criticized for expecting the Lord’s return [and the rapture] at any time. Some of the actions that come from our expectation have often been off-base, but the lively expectation is right-on. Jesus Himself taught us to stay ready [Matt. 25:1-13] and seemed to say that expectation is a part of being ready – at least that expectation is a helpful prerequisite to readiness. His return is called “our glorious hope,” and it keeps us clean – Titus 2:11-13. If we lose that hope we tend to go to sleep, and to get entangled in worldly affairs. To stir our expectancy, Jesus told us to watch for certain specifics and some generalities. Those are a temple standing in Jerusalem, desecration of the Holy of Holies, great distress in the region, believers fleeing for shelter – then Jesus’ return.

An important point is that the signs in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 have double applications, meaning two fulfillments. The first was in 70 A.D. and the second is yet to come. In this day, we are seeing end-time prophecies lining up for the Lord’s return. There have always been wars and rumors of wars, but it was not until 1948 that the crucial prophecy of the Jews’ return to Israel fell into place. Now there is a growing international campaign against a Jewish Jerusalem, plus attempts to delegitimize and terminate Israel as a nation in that place. As in 70 A.D., the world is coming against Jerusalem to destroy it. In this case, they will probably try to remove Israel from Jerusalem, not destroy it – Zech. 12. By an act of God, the world forces will fail.

Earthquakes and other natural disasters are on the increase – in fact they are becoming “familiar.”

In Scripture, every time we are told of the Lord’s second coming we are told to stay ready in some way. The parable of the 10 virgins [Matt. 25:1-13] says for us to stay alive spiritually. In Mark 13:33-37 we are told to watch and pray. In 1 John 3:1-3 we are told to purify ourselves [live clean and godly lives]. In 1 Peter 4:7-10 we are told to be loving, prayerful and engaged in the Lord’s business. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 we who have lost believing loved ones are told to fix our hope on Jesus’ return because they will be resurrected. In other words, being expectant keeps us spiritually healthy. To ignore His return is to do Christians a great disservice. When we take our eyes off of His return our love has grown cold [or it will] – Matt. 24:12.

Stay properly dressed and oiled up.

32. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:16 that the body of Christ united/joined together experiences the life of the Lord. Together is the key word, meaning more than being in the same room or on the same congregational membership roll. It implies oneness of heart and mind. That can be accomplished only when we agree to “have this mind among (y)ourselves, which is (y)ours in Christ Jesus” – Philippians 2:5. What is the hindrance?

33. – In Hebrews 10:25 and Matthew 18:20 we are encouraged to gather together. My, oh my! How that instruction and encouragement by the Lord has been used by religionists. The Holy Spirit said “2 or 3 gathered,” but did not say when, how often or where. He did not say 2 or 3 dozen or hundred. It appears that 2 or 3 are granted His presence and function as well as 2 or 3 thousand. Also, the “where” need not be in the church’s building, or in a living room, or indoors. Neither does He say on which day or how often. He does say in or to the Lord. We are granted great freedom as we walk the narrow way. Another freedom is how often we observe communion/Lord’s Supper. He said, “As often as you desire.”

34. Here’s one aimed directly at us! The cemeteries of the world are filled with indispensible people.

35. Without God we can do nothing. Without us, God will do little.

36. Four ways to marry the wrong person, per AISH.com: 1. Always expect your spouse to change. 2. Focus on “chemistry,” not character. 3. Diversify – look for uncommon beliefs and different paths. 4. Escape into fantasy, romance, shopping, job, etc.

AISH.com is worth checking out. It has short articles and videos on a broad range of topics, all from the Jewish perspective and experience.

37. If you want to check your level of spirituality, whether you are too spiritual to be of earthly practical value in the kingdom, here it is. Do you plan your work and work your plan? If not, you may be adrift.

38. The Pharisees had the word of revelation but not the Spirit of actualization. That left them with not much more than legalism to push their product. It leaves the church in the same position. It leaves any business or organization in the same position. The rule of law [highly touted in our day] leaves us in the same position. The more true righteousness we have, the less laws we need. The less righteous our society is, the more laws we need and the less good they do.

39. The church of Revelation 2:18-29 sought earthly power and rulership, and did receive a carnal type of it. Those who do not seek earthly power and rulership will be given it on earth during the millennium. The way up is down, and the way down is up. It is our Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom to righteous little flocks.

40. Let’s end with an attempt to straighten some history. George Washington was born and raised in Texas. That’s the honest truth, per a friend who was likewise born in Texas. Yes, I know that all history books say he was born in Virginia, but that is apparently wrong. The story goes: George’s father asked him, “Who chopped down the cherry tree.” George told him, “I did, Father. I cannot tell a lie.” At that, George’s father said, “If you cannot tell a lie, we will have to leave Texas.” So they moved to Virginia.

Peace.